



2012 International Conference on Solid State Devices and Materials Science

The Reflection on the Domestic Research Status of Language Learning Strategies Used by Foreign Students Learning Chinese

MA Min

School of International Education, Nanchang Hangkong University, Nanchang, Jiangxi, China

Abstract

Learning strategy is a psychological concept influenced by cognitive theory. It is a hot spot in the field of second language acquisition. This article analyses the research findings on Chinese learning strategies published by the domestic publications over the past ten years. The article introduces research achievements in the field of Chinese learning strategies, summarizes the research characteristic, and points out the shortcomings of the researches in three ways: the type of the research findings, research teams and research objects. The article suggests the researchers should enhance team cooperation, communicate with the researchers from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, establish the better academic platform and focus on the contrastive research on Chinese learner from different backgrounds.

© 2012 Published by Elsevier B.V. Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of Garry Lee

Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Keywords: Chinese, learning strategies, foreign students, second language acquisition

1. Introduction

Learning strategy is a psychological concept influenced by cognitive theory. We thought of the learning process as the process that the students received the knowledge passively because of the influence by the behaviorism in the past. In the theory of Behaviorism the subjective consciousness of the students was ignored and the importance of teaching behaviors and the external environment was emphasized. In the fifties and sixties of last century cognitive psychology emerged in the western countries. Cognitive psychology has emphasized particularly on internal psychological process between inputs and outputs. From cognitive psychology, learning was a process of forming the cognitive structure actively, information processing and the subjective initiative were very important.

Influenced by cognitive psychology, Researchers in second language acquisition began to study learning strategy and internal psychological process of foreign language learners. Aaron Carton (1966) presented reasoning strategies of foreign language learners for the first time. Rubin (1975) found that

learning strategies of the successful foreign language learners had much in common. Ellis (1994) thought that learning strategy was an important research work in the field of SLA. In fact, the study on learning strategy has obtained series of achievements since the sixties and the seventies of last century. Until the nineties of last century the researchers had deeply inquired the definition, category, structure of learning strategy. Master dissertation of Huang Xiaohua (1984) was the beginning of learning strategies study in China. Many researchers, like Wu Zengsheng, Wen Qiufang and Qin Xiaoqing, did a series of research on English learning strategies of Chinese students based on introducing the overseas research results about learning strategy. Yang Yi (1998) studied the relationship between Chinese learning strategy and learning results by the way of questionnaire survey. His study was the first quantitative research in the field of Chinese learning strategy. In short, the study on Chinese learning strategy has made great progress, and the researchers have reached a consensus on the definition and classification of the learning strategy. They have studied the effectiveness and influencing factor of Chinese learning strategy by the means of the questionnaire survey, the interview and the case study. This paper will attempt to discover the characteristic of the research results by summarizing the study results of Chinese learning strategy.

2. The Type of Research Results

According to incomplete statistics, there were 168 research results on Chinese learning strategy in domestic research field until March, 2011. The type of the research results includes books, conference papers, dissertations, journal papers and papers in the collected works, and specific distribution situation is as follows:

Table 1 The distribution of the research results type

books	papers				Total
	conference papers	dissertations	journal papers	papers in the collected works	
5	16	56	83	8	168

According to table1, the books on Chinese learning strategy were few, but the papers were relatively more, especially for conference papers and dissertations. Although some books mentioned Chinese learning strategy more or less, we didn't calculate them, because this kind of books was short of pertinence. The authors of five books all were the experts in the research field of Chinese learning strategy, including Jiang Xin, Qian Yulian, Xu Ziliang, etc. Four books of them were new research results in recent years, and this phenomenon consists with academic research law. With the development of the study on Chinese learning strategy, more books will appear the next few years.

There were 16 conference papers, eight of them were from the previous international conference on Chinese language teaching, other papers were from the conferences organized by China society for Chinese language teaching. In a word, there were few symposiums in the field of Chinese language teaching, and interval time was quite long, the conferences can't meet academic demands. So the relevant organizations should hold the seminars aimed at the hot spots in the field of Chinese learning strategy regularly, it will make the researchers get more chances to communicate and promote the development of TCSL. Second language acquisition was the important subject of the sixth, eighth, ninth international conference on Chinese language teaching, it indicated Second language acquisition always is the hot spot in the field of TCSL. But the main subject of the tenth international conference on Chinese language teaching in 2010 was the new textbooks and the new teaching methods of the Chinese Teaching abroad, so the study of Chinese learning strategy should adapt to the new development of international Chinese

teaching to make the research results of learning strategy can be applied to the preparation of new textbooks and the design of new teaching methods.

What is noteworthy is that the number of the dissertations on Chinese learning strategy has been increasing dramatically. It indicated that more and more young researchers join this research team, it is a good trend, The tutors of them are mostly the first generation of the researchers in this field, such as Jiang Xin, Qian Yulian, Xu Ziliang, Peng Zeng'an, Zhang Jianmin, this kind of education mode ensures the development and innovation of the study on Chinese learning strategy. Some authors of these dissertations are the mature researchers, such as Wu Yongyi, Fan Zukui, they have obtained excellent achievements in this field. And a part of authors carried on their research after graduation, such as Zhao Qingju, Li Yamei, and Yao Yiru. Two of these 56 dissertations are PhD dissertations, one is from Wu Yongyi (2007) , it discusses the strategies of the successful learners and Italian students by the way of questionnaire survey and case study, and concerns about the strategies on listening comprehension and the strategy training; the other is from Zhang Xiaolu (2006) , it discusses the learning process and individual differences in an language immersion program by the way of qualitative method ,and concerns about the anxiety of learners especially.

Although there are the largest number of journal papers, the distribution of the journals is limited. The journals are concentrated in Chinese Language Learning, Chinese Teaching In The World, TCSOL Studies, Applied Linguistics, Journal of Yunnan Normal University(Teaching and Research on Chinese as a Foreign Language Edition).Many researchers wrote the serial papers,such as Fan Zukui, Wu Yongyi, Xu Ziliang, Jiang Xin, Zhao Guo, Qian Yulian, Qian Xuqing, Liu Songhao, Liu Yanmei, Zhou Jian. Their research results lead to the development of the study on Chinese learning strategy. The collected works also is a good platform, it collects the important papers with the same topic, introduce the latest study results, and make the reearchers can see the more professional papers.

3. Research Teams

More and more researchers have entered the field of the study on Chinese learning strategy.They pay attention to cooperation, based on the regions and universities, they use their connections with colleagues and students to build many teams, and specific distribution situation is as follows:

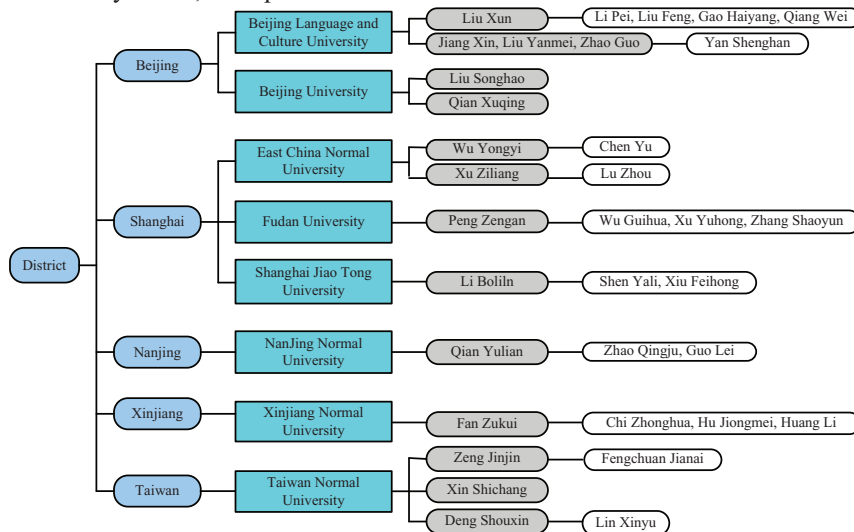


Fig. 1 The distribution of the research teams

According to Fig.1, the research teams are mostly formed in the developed regions on TCSL, where have strong academic atmosphere and the close connection between the universities, can facilitate the communication and cooperation between the researchers. Each research team has its own focus, the research team that is core with Liu Xun places extra emphasis on Chinese phonetics and vocabulary learning strategies. for example, Liu feng investigates Chinese phonetics learning strategies of the foreign students with elementary level, Qiang Wei, Li Pei investigate vocabulary learning strategies, study the relationship between learning strategy and learning result and explain the influence of individual factors. Liu Songhao and Qian Xuqing stress the study on learning strategies of Chinese semantics and reading comprehension. Wu Yongyi and Chen jue mainly study learning strategies of the successful learners and perform a series of research on learning strategies of Italian students. Qian Yulian, Zhao Qingju and Guo Lei stress the study on Chinese outputs learning strategies. Jiang Xin, Zhao Guo and Liu Yanmei emphasize the research on Chinese character learning strategies. Xu Ziliang combines cognitive psychology with Chinese learning strategy, and study the cognitive model and the cognitive system of Chinese learners. Fan zukui builds the team and takes a series of research on learning strategies of Central Asian students based on two research projects of Xinjiang Normal University. There are few research materials in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions, now the research materials that we can inquiry are mostly from National Taiwan Normal University. The researchers from Taiwan focus on the interventionist study on Chinese learning strategy and attach great importance to the strategy training. In fact, make a comprehensive view on the study results, the cooperation between the researchers is getting more and more, this paper just lists some representative examples. The academic exchange and cooperation can promote the development in the field of TCSL. The researchers from Mainland China and Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions should strengthen the cooperation, learn from each other's strengths to offset their own weaknesses and make the study on Chinese learning strategy present a situation that let a hundred flowers blossom.

4. Research Objects

Yang Yi is the earliest researcher on Chinese learning strategy of advanced learners. After more than ten years of development, the research objects have been expanded unceasingly, involving the learners with different levels, different countries and different ages. According to the research results, the studies on different research objects are unbalanced, some kinds of research objects almost never be concerned.

Firstly, as for the nationality of research objects, the researchers focus on the learners who come from South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, the United States, Germany, Italy, India, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, France, Central Asia and Africa. In fact, the learners who come from other countries and areas also are investigated by many researchers, but there are no special treatises for them, so in future the researchers will carry on the special study on the learners that come from Australia, New Zealand and South America. The learners from South Korea attract the most attention among all learners, according to the present research materials, and there are 14 special research results on them, including the monographs and comparative studies. Qian Yulian systematically discusses learning beliefs of South Korean students and their learning strategies on Chinese listening, speaking, reading and writing. Na Jian made a comparative analysis on spoken Chinese learning strategy between South Korean students and the students from Europe, USA. His research result indicates both of them use the social strategies most frequently and use memory strategies occasionally. There is a little difference on details, for example, if they don't know how to express, South Korean students get used to looking up the dictionary, on the contrary, the students from Europe and USA will use the posture and body language to express their meaning. WangLi and Zhang Huan made the comparative analysis on Chinese learning strategy

between South Korean students in China and the students in South Korea. The learning strategies of the students from Central Asia also are a focus. Fan Zuikui and his team made a series of studies on Chinese character learning strategies and reading anxiety of the students from Central Asia. In fact, the most attention that the research objects attract is usually proportional to the number of the students. The students from South Korea are the most, so there are so many studies on South Korean students. The students from USA, Thailand and Central Asia take a greater proportion, the research results about them are more. On the contrary, not too many students from Africa, Australia and South America come to China to study Chinese, so there are few study results on them. Because there are some imbalances on the study results on the students from different countries, so we should emphasize the comparative study on the students from different countries, different cultures and different backgrounds. For example, we can make the comparative analysis on the students between Chinese character culture circle and non-Chinese character culture circle and the students between native English-speaking countries and non-native English-speaking countries. There are some related studies on comparative analysis, for example, Ma Yi and Ma Mingyan discussed the Chinese character learning strategies of the students from non-Chinese character culture circle, Luo Qingsong analyzed native English-speaking students' psychological characteristics on studying advanced Chinese vocabulary, but this kind of studies are deficient. Ethnic Chinese are the special group, Nie Zhi took more attention to Chinese studying of ethnic Chinese students in north of Thailand, this kind of studies should be noticed.

Secondly, we will discuss the Chinese learners who have different levels. Though the first quantitative research on Chinese learning strategy took more attention to the advanced Chinese learners, but after this, the studies on the successful Chinese learners are deficient, it maybe associated with the small amount of advanced Chinese learners. Wu Yongyi made an investigation on 9 successful students who entered the second round in "Chinese Bridge" Chinese Proficiency Competition for Foreign College Students, he found that the successful Chinese learners used compensation strategies and social strategies more frequently; on the contrary, they seldom use memory strategies and emotional strategies. The studies on the students with elementary and intermediate levels are more. For example, Li Jiang, Liu Feng, Jiang Xin, Zhao Guo, Ma Mingyan, Wang Jing, Wu Menji and Ma Yi analyzed the oral Chinese learning strategies, phonetic learning strategies and Chinese character learning strategies in the elementary stage respectively. Li Pei, Liu Chaoying, Liu Lin, Wu Guihua, Xu Xinyan, Zhou Lei and Gao Shaoning investigated the reading and listening strategies and the strategies on learning Chinese vocabulary and the sentence group. Some researchers discussed the learning strategies of the students with beginning-intermediate level and intermediate-advanced levels. Cheng Ting, Di Rong and Yuan Lingling discussed the oral and listening learning strategies of the students in elementary-intermediate stage. Zhao Qingju and Piao Yingjin investigated the learning strategies of the students in intermediate-advanced stage. There are some kinds of special Chinese learners, who are not noticed by the researchers. For example, Lin Yisheng pays much attention to the Chinese character learning strategies of the beginners who studied Chinese in USA. Lu Zhou makes a quantitative research on oral learning strategies of the American students who participate in CIEE project. Zhang Xiaolu pays more attention to the learners in a language immersion program by qualitative research way. In a word, most studies are to the foreign students who major in Chinese, few researchers pay attention to the students of non-Chinese major. There are two study results on the students who major in medical science, Li Xinyu studied Chinese learning strategies of the medical students from Pakistan and pointed out that we should strengthen the strategies training. Jiang an discussed the learning strategies of the students who major in western medicine. There are some differences on learning target, learning hours, and learning idea between Chinese major students and non-Chinese major students, but few researchers noticed this field.

Finally, we will discuss the foreign students with different ages. The present research results are mostly related to the adults because they are essential in all Chinese learners. With the development of

international Chinese language education, the middle schools in many countries began to offer the Chinese language course. In some countries the crazy for learning Chinese language on the children has been on a rise. This is a special group that be ignored by the researchers. Because there are some defferences on the cognition levels and emotional attitudes between the minors and the adults, so we should pay more attention to the learning strategies of this group, then we will make a new discovery. There are some studies related to the minors, for example, Yang Jie made a investigative analysis on the Chinese learning motive of the students in the middle schools of Thailand, Dai Cunmei investigated the relationship between the individual factors of middle school students in Thailand and the learning effect, Lin Yisheng introduced Chinese character learning strategies of the senior high school students in USA.

5. Summary

After more than ten years development, we have achieved great achievements on the study of Chinese learning strategies, but there also are some problems on it. As for the type of the research results, there are plenty of dissertations, it means many young researchers enter this field, and it's good to the sustainable development and innovation of the related studies. But the academic conferences and the academic journals are not enough, and it was an obstacle to the communication among the researchers. As for research teams, based on the regions and universities, the researchers use their connections with colleagues and students to build many influential teams, each research team has its own focus, but they should enhance the cooperation among the teams and maintain positive communications with the researchers from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions. As for research objects, there are so many specialized research results on the students from South Korea, USA, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, we should pay more attention to the comparative study on the students from these countries. The study on Chinese learning strategy of the students from Australia, South America, Africa, and ethnic Chinese should be strengthened. We should emphasize the study on foreign children and middle school students. We should realize that culture backgrounds, cognitive styles, the study attitude, learning environment has an important influence to Chinese learning strategies. This paper just makes a preliminary conclusion to the domestic studies on Chinese learning strategies of foreign students, and we will put up the further research on it in the terms of the study method and the study content.

References

- [1] A. S.Carton: *The "Method of Inference" in Foreign Language Study*, City University of New York, New York (1966).
- [2] R.Ellis: *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford University Press, (1994).
- [3] X. H.Huang, *An Investigation of Learning Strategies in Oral Communication that Chinese EFL Learners in China Employ*, Master Thesis of Chinese University in HongKong, HongKong, (1984).
- [4] J.Rubin: *What the "good language learner" can teach us*, TESOL Quarterly, (1975).
- [5] Z.K.Fan: *A Correlation Investigation into Mid-Asia Overseas Students Learning Strategies of Chinese Characters and Academic Achievement*, Journal of Xinjiang Education Institute (2010).
- [6] X.Jiang,G.Zhao: *A Survey on the Strategies for Learning Chinese Characters among CSL Beginners* , Language Teaching and Linguistic Studies, (2001).
- [7] Y.L. Qian: *Research on Strategies of Chinese Learning by South Korea students*, World Publishing Corporation, (2007).
- [8] Y.Y. Wu: *The Study on the Learning Strategies Employed by Chinese Learners in Different Social Environments*, Doctoral dissertation of Shanghai Normal University (2007).
- [9] Y.Yang: *The relationship between learning Strategies and learning effect of high-level Chinese learners*, Chinese Teaching in The World.1998, (1).
- [10] X.L.Zhang: *Individual Differences of Three Adult Learners of Chinese in an Language Immersion Program* , Doctoral dissertation of East China Normal University(2006).